

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, GE

SUBJECT: RECENT INDICATIONS OF POSITIVE GDR MEDIA APPROACH TO
NEW ADMINISTRATION

REF: BERLIN 5272

1. SUMMARY: GDR NEWSPAPERS GAVE THE PRESIDENT'S FEBRUARY 24 NEWS
CONFERENCE SLIGHTLY MORE NEGATIVE COVERAGE THAN THE NEW
ADMINISTRATION HAS RECEIVED IN RECENT WEEKS BUT THERE
ARE CONTINUING SIGNS THAT THE GDR MEDIA IS UNDER ORDERS
AO ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE IN US REPORTING. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE GDR'S ADN CORRESPONDENT IN WASHINGTON REPORTED
IN AN ARTICLE CARRIED IN NEUES DEUTSCHLAND FEBRUARY 25
THAT CARTER'S LATEST NEWS CONFERENCE FOCUSSED ON ENERGY
PROBLEMS, MILITARY POLICY AND THE CIA, HIGHLIGHTING
THE CREATION OF A NEW ENERGY MINISTRY. ADN REPORTED
THAT CARTER CONFIRMED THAT US FIRMS HAD WITHHELD FUEL

TO INCREASE PROFITS.

3. ADN GAVE DOWNBEAT COVERAGE TO CARTER'S STATEMENTS ON DISARMAMENT, CITING THE PRESIDENT'S REMARK THAT "INFLATIONARY PRESSURE" MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO GIVE EXACT FIGURES ON NEXT YEAR'S MILITARY BUDGET. COMMENTING FOR THE FIRST TIME ON THE PRESIDENT'S STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS, ADN ALLEGED THAT HE HAD SIDE-STEPPED A QUESTION AS TO WHETHER HE WOULD TAKE ACTION TO HELP THE VICTIMS OF POLITICAL REPRESSION IN WHICH THE US HAD INFLUENCE. ADN ALSO POINTED OUT THAT CARTER DID NOT MENTION CHILE IN HIS REPLY.

4. FINALLY, ADN STATED THAT THE PRESIDENT IN EFFECT DEFENDED THE CIA AGAINST REPORTS THAT IT HAD PAID MONEY TO FOREIGN LEADERS, A CLAIM REPEATED IN A MARCH 1 ND ITEM WHICH QUOTES AP TO THE EFFECT THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD REFERRED TO KING HUSSEIN AS " A RELIABLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION" AT A MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.

5. IN SPITE OF THIS MILDLY CRITICAL TONE ON THE CARTER NEWS CONFERENCE, ND PLAYED UP IN ITS MARCH 1 EDITION SENATOR SPARKMAN'S DECLARATION THAT A SALT AGREEMENT MUST BE IN PRINCIPAL GOAL OF US FOREIGN POLICY.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT'S NEWS CONFERENCE DID NOT RECEIVE RAVE REVIEWS IN ND, THERE ARE INCREASING SIGNS THAT THE GDR MEDIA ARE UNDER ORDERS TO CAST THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IN A POSITIVE LIGHT. THE DEPUTY FOREIGN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLICY EDITOR OF EAST BERLIN DIALY BERLINER ZEITUNG (BZ) TOLD EMBOFF FEB 18 THAT THE SED CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAD CALLED THE EDITOR OF BZ RECENTLY TO PRAISE TWO POSITIV ARTICLES ON CARTER BY BZ STAFFER MANFRED QUIRING (BERLIN 5272). THE BZ DEPUTY EDITOR TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF THE FIRST QUIRING PIECE HAD ACTUALLY BEEN CRITICAL OF THE PRESIDENT'S RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND AND HAD RAISED DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER HE COULD TAKE POSITIVE STEPS IN SAL IN THE FACE OF THE US ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY AND THE LABOR UNIONS. THE DEPUTY EDITOR SAID SHE HAD DECIDED TO RECAST THE ARTICLE TO EMPHASIZE THE PRESIDENT'S POSITIVE STATEMENTS ON DETENTE AND TO PRESENT THE CARTER CABINET IN A POSITIVE LIGHT, REASONING THAT SUCH AN APPROACH WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE GIVEN THE MILD TONE TOWARD CARTER IN THE SOVIET PRESS. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAD CALLED BZ THE NEXT DAY TO SAY THAT THIS WAS EXACTLY THE KIND OF REPORTING THEY WANTED AT THE PRESENT TIME, AND THE YOUNG STAFFER WHO WROTE THE FIRST DRAFT ENDED UP GETTING A PREMIUM. THE DEPUTY EDITOR THUS FELT

ENCOURAGED TO FOLLOW UP WITH AN ARTICLE ON TH CARTER CABINET USING MATERIALS FROM THE USMISSION IN WEST BERLIN, WHICH WAS SIMILARLY PRAISED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

7. THE BZ DEPUTY EDITOR ALSO TOLD EMBOFF THAT IT APPEARS TO BE AN UNUSUALLY GOOD TIME FOR UNDERTAKING MORE BALANCED REPORTING ON THE US IN THE GDR PRESS. SHE REPORTED THAT KLAUS WILCZYNSKI A BZ COMMENTATOR WHO HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING FOR MONTHS TO GET CENTRAL COMMITTEE APPROVAL TO TRAVEL TO THE US TO DO A SERIES OF BACKGROUND PIECES, WAS SUDDENLY CALLED INTO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN MID-FEBRUARY AND URGED TO PREPARE A US TRIP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. HE WAS REPORTEDLY TOLD BY THE HEAD OF TH MFA USA SECTION , DR. GEYER, THAT THE GDR HAD BEEN DISSATISFIED WITH THE " SHALLOW AND CLICHED" REPORTIG THAT HAD RESULTED FROM A SIMILAR TRIP BY DR. HEINER WINKLER OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GDR WEEKLY HORIZONT ONE YEAR EARLIER. ACCORDING TO THE BZ DEPUTY EDITOR, GEYER TOLD WILCYZNSKI THAT THE MFA HOPED THAT MORE BALANCED AND FACTUAL REPORTING WOULD RESULT FROM HIS UPCOMING TRIP.

8. DR. HEINZ KOSIN OF GDR INSTITUTE IPW ALSO TOLD EMBOFF FEBRUARY 28 THAT GDR MEDIA HAS BEEN ISSUED GUIDANCE TO REFRAIN FROM EXCESSIVE CRITICISM OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION, A SITUATION HE COMPARED WITH THE " BRAND(T) SCHUTZWOCHE" WHICH PREVAILED IN THE EARLY 1970S WHEN THE GDR MEDIA WAS INSTRUCTED TO GO EASY ON THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT.
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